

Just for kids — sun-kabobs and solar sizzle

By Lucy Shober

Picture yourself in this dreamy scenario: It's a hot summer afternoon. The sun is beaming through the shade trees as you loll in the hammock sipping fresh-made icy tea and nibbling tidbits from a home-cooked sizzling lunch.

Sound great? It will sound and taste even better when you find that you can create this scene yourself with no help! While it can be pretty dangerous to try and cook lunch on your mom's kitchen range, there's a safe and fun way to cook your own lunch with a heat source that's roughly 149,600,000 kilometers away. It's hard to burn your fingers on this stove! Our special oven (if you haven't already guessed) is that amazing cooker, our SUN!

You can produce the heat and water to cook a delicious meal just by using

a little ingenuity and that big ball of fire in the sky. Follow the directions below for making a *solar still*. You can use the water that you produce to make that icy *sun tea* and to wash up with before lunch. To make your meal, you should follow the guidelines for a *solar cooker*, and the recipe for *sun-kabobs*.

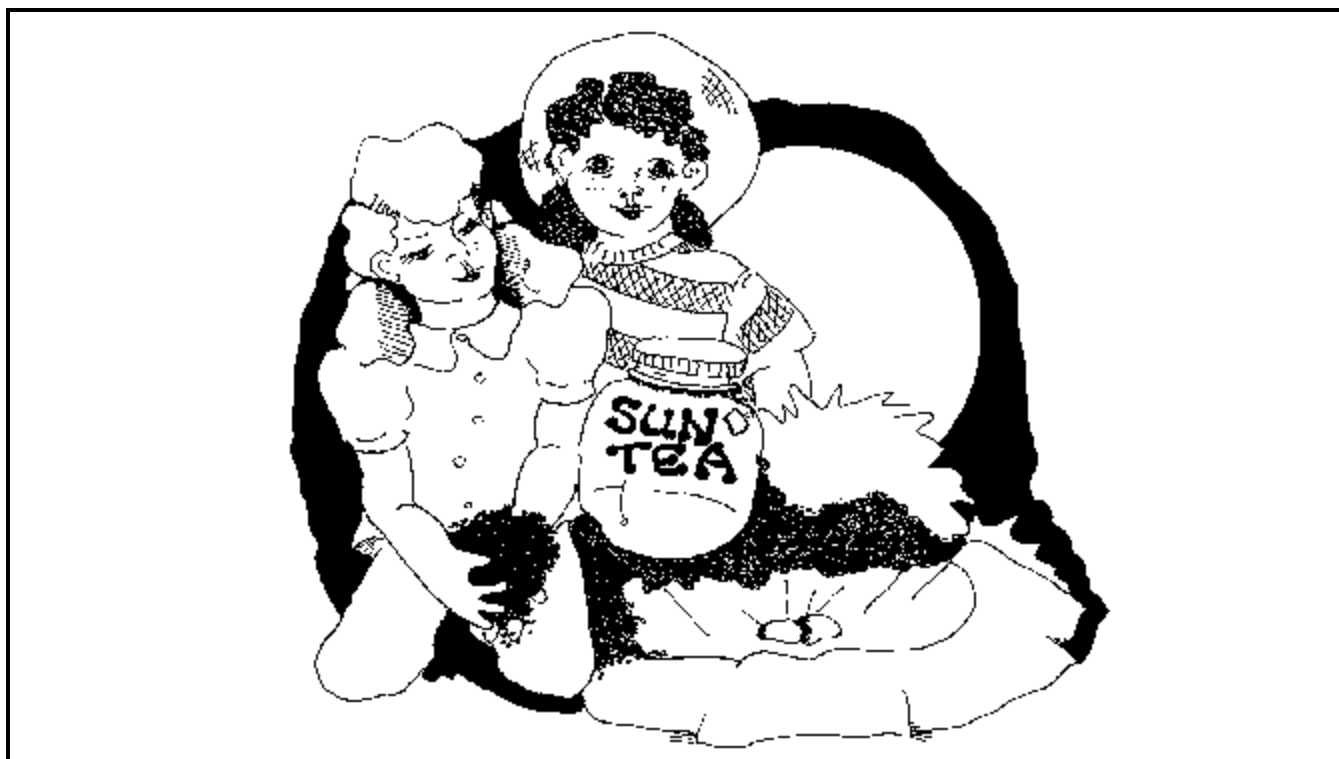
Solar still

If you would like to use the water produced by the solar still for your picnic lunch, it's best to get started a few days early in order to collect enough.

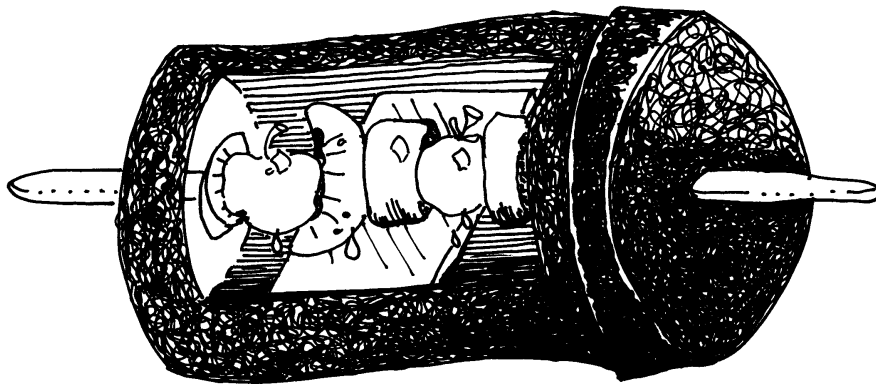
To make the still, get permission to dig a hole in a sunny spot in your yard. It must be about twenty inches deep and forty inches across. Put a small bowl at the center of your hole. Now you must put a *clean* clear plas-

tic sheet (about sixty inches wide) over the hole and secure it there with the dirt that you've taken from the hole. Just place handfuls of it all around the edge of the sheet, being careful not to get any into the bowl inside. Now find a little rock to place in the center of the sheet. This will weigh down the plastic with the low point being directly over the bowl. Don't let the plastic touch the bowl: it should be a couple of inches above it.

As the sun heats your still, the water contained in the earthy floor of it will evaporate and rise to the plastic. Soon that water will condense and form droplets which will drip down the plastic into your bowl. It might be a long wait, but your fresh water will be as clean as the driven snow! Remember this trick if you ever get stuck in the Mojave desert.



Place handfuls of dirt around the edges of the plastic sheeting that covers your solar still. (Color this picture!)



You can add a mirror to your solar stove to create more heat.

Sun tea

When you've collected enough water, find a large glass jar to make your sun tea. Put into it several tea bags (use herb tea, not caffeine tea) and maybe a spice or two. Cloves or fennel would be nice, but sift them out before drinking the tea. Cap the jar, and set it in a hot sunny spot. After several hours, check to see if the tea is dark enough, add ice, and thank your flaming friend in the sky for this refreshing drink.

Solar cooker

For this great project, you will need to have these items:

- Some black tempera paint or a large sheet of flat black paper
- An empty oatmeal box
- A large sheet of aluminum foil
- A small mirror
- A nice sunny day
- Scissors
- Good tape
- A *clean* thin dowel or long thin *clean* stick

First you should cut a rectangular hole in the side of the box. Leave about an inch at each end. (See picture.) Now cover the inside of the box with the foil, keeping the shiny side

showing. Tape the edges to the box, then tightly cover the outside with dark paper (so the hole stays open) or paint it with the black tempera.

If you do your work outdoors, you will notice that the foil reflects the glare of the sun into your eyes, and that the black surface is much easier to look at. The black absorbs the sunlight and heat and the foil reflects them into your eyes...or onto the sun-kabob! The cooker will work from the inside and out to give you a good lunch.

Now, to get things cooking, poke the dowel through one end of the box and out the other. When you feel that it is sturdy enough, slip one end out and spear your delectable ingredients from the recipe onto it. (The recipe follows.) It's best to alternate fruits and meat so that the flavors will mingle. Now re-poke the stick into its hole, close up your solar oven, and find a hot sunny spot in which to set up your outside kitchen. You can secure the cooker by wedging pebbles under it, but make *sure* that it is facing directly at the sun. Slip the mirror into the box to reflect even more sun rays onto the kabob. Depending on the type of day you choose, you should have a meal in thirty minutes to an hour. Have fun, and watch out for Bowzer or Fido or *whoever* might want to steal your hard earned picnic lunch!

Recipe for sun-kabobs

You will need:

- One hot dog or some sliced pieces of ham
- Some pineapple chunks
- A few cherries
- Sliced oranges, apples or any other delectable fruit.

Chop these ingredients into bite sized pieces, put them in a bowl and pour any of the leftover juice from your fruit over it. If you are adventuresome, you can add a dash of cinnamon or nutmeg to this mixture before you cover and refrigerate it. You can let it sit in the refrigerator for a while, to let the flavors mingle, or use it right away.

Enjoy! Δ